



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE EAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012930

Address: 1321 Seneca Street

Applicant: Jim Westcott

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, February 20, 2013

Board Members Present: Dawn Bushnaq
Ric Cochrane
Lisa Picard
Chip Wall

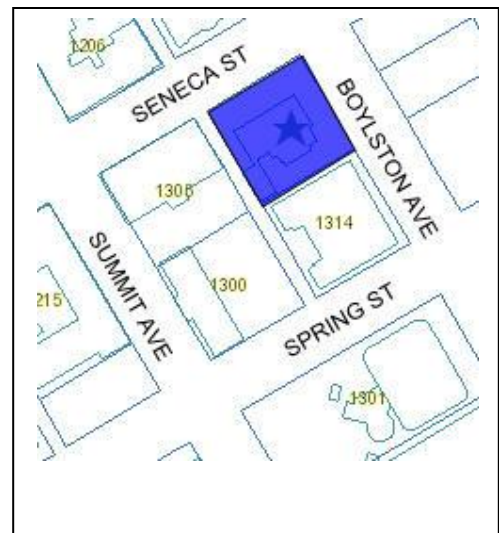
Board Members Absent: Wolf Saar

DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Highrise (HR)

Nearby Zones: North: At E. Union St., zone changes from HR to Midrise (MR) and Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 65' height limit (NC3P-65) in a pedestrian zone.
South: At Madison St., zoning shifts to NC3P-160' and Major Institutional Overlay (MIO) with 70' height limits.
East: East of Harvard Ave, the zoning changes from HR to NC3P-65.
West: Mostly HR zoning with a MIO west of Summit St.



Lot Area: 14,400 sq. ft.

Current Development: Temporary parking lot.

Access: Alley access

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: The site occupies the northeast portion of the block at the intersection of Boylston Avenue and Seneca Street. An alley services the site connecting Seneca and Spring Streets. Across the alley lies a two story wood framed structure housing a clinic. Sharing a property line to the south is the Hilltop Court, a six story apartment building with retail on the ground floor. The Seattle First Baptist Church, a designated city landmark, occupies the block to the east.

This portion of the First Hill neighborhood lies within an area defined by Madison Ave, Boren Ave, Broadway and Union St. Two major institutions define the area's borders ---Swedish Hospital and Virginia Mason. The street grid changes at Union St. and Broadway lending interest and complexity to the neighborhood. In general, the area is characterized by lowrise and midrise apartment and commercial buildings. The First Hill Plaza, the tallest building in the neighborhood, lies to the southeast. Landmarks in the immediate vicinity include Seattle First Baptist Church, Stimson Green House and Dearborn House. Several other city landmarks lie just north of E. Union St.

ECAs: No mapped environmental critical areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a 24-story structure (with 30 feet of roof top amenity and mechanical space above it) containing 215 residential units above two live/work units and five levels of below grade parking. Access to the parking garage would occur from the alley.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant initially illustrated three basic massing schemes with commonalities of a four-story plinth, below grade parking accessed from the alley, retail or live/work units lining Boylston Ave. and residential lobby/amenity areas fronting onto Seneca St. Scheme A, a code compliant option, comprises a four-story plinth, approximately matching the heights of other structures in the vicinity, and a larger, undifferentiated vertical shaft slightly stepped back from the buildings to the south and to the west. Less significant setbacks occur on the Seneca and Boylston streets. The pronounced four story podium remains in Scheme B; however, the upper mass has greater modulation at the corners and a smaller floor plate at the three uppermost levels. Scheme C

resembles a series of five stacked boxes. The shifting boxes appear somewhat engaged or interlocked with one another. The largest setback for the structure occurs at the south property line, ranging from 15 to 20 feet. The setback at the alley varies from two feet to ten feet for most of the structure's height.

At the second EDG meeting, the applicant presented a fourth massing option. The design of Option # 4 deemphasized a bold manipulation of the mass (Option # 3) for subtle distinctions in the building skin. The architect established most of the setbacks at grade allowing the mass to rise to nearly the full height of the building with the exception of the south façade. The differentiation in the elevations occurs in the use of materials, color and detailing. The intended effect, the articulation of a podium and two engaged shafts, is conveyed by reddish hued terra cotta at the plinth, a dark grey volume that rises uninterrupted from the Seneca and Boylston corner to the building parapet, and a lighter grey volume setback two feet from the darker grey shaft, representing the predominant elevation above the podium on the south and west elevations. It wraps the corners to flank the higher and darker grey shaft on Seneca and Boylston streets. The overall impression, at least from the northeast, is a four-story base or plinth of terra cotta and glazing that relates in height to several of the surrounding buildings and visually supports a tower with slight modulations emphasized by color and detailing variations. At the corners of the tower, balconies extend outward from the mass.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicant had refined much of the proposal with alterations to the massing, the detailing of the building skin and the podium design at the alley and south elevations.

PUBLIC COMMENT

At the Recommendation meeting eighteen members of the public affixed their names to the sign-in sheet. The speakers raised the following comments:

- Representatives of Hilltop Court support the code complying option rather than the departure. They would like to protect their property line.
- Noise produced by the residents on the proposed deck facing south will bother the Hilltop Court residents.
- Granting the departure will compromise the building rights of the Hilltop Court.
- The balconies risk becoming storage areas. The balconies should be eliminated. (Several speakers repeated this sentiment.)
- Balconies above five stories are useless amenities.
- Residents of First Hill Plaza will lose views of Lake Union. Several modifications to the design would open up views. 1) Lower the height of the amenity from 15 to ten feet; 2) reduce the height of the mechanical screening to align with the top of the equipment; 3) shift the amenity area and mechanical equipment to the west in order to provide views parallel to Boylston Ave. These actions will preserve views to Lake Union.
- Please consider glare impacts from all of the proposed structure's glazing.

- Provide enough parking to accommodate one space per dwelling unit at the very least.

By the Recommendation meeting, DPD received several additional letters. The themes reiterated many of those described in the earlier public comments and letters.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

A. Site Planning

A-2 **Streetscape Compatibility.** The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

Recommendation Meeting: Directed to increase the amount of transparency along the Seneca street level, the architects increased the amount of glazing and proposed a wall of fixed, terra cotta louvers in front of the generator room.

A-3 **Entrances Visible from the Street.** Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

A-4 **Human Activity.** New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

Recommendation Meeting: Revisions in response to the earlier guidance for a greater connectivity between the interior life of the building and street activity illustrate somewhat more glazing. This satisfied the Board. Staff note: The row of trees and wide planting area between the windows and the sidewalk along with the series of back of house functions along Seneca creates a realm much less interactive than the Boylston street front.

A-5 **Respect for Adjacent Sites.** Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

Recommendation Meeting: An increase in the depth of the landscaping at the second floor terrace addresses some of the concerns about the proximity of the proposed structure to the Hilltop Court. The Board approved the departure for the smaller setback from the property line at the lower level.

See B-1 guidance for a discussion of the roof top.

- A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

Recommendation Meeting: See Board guidance for D-1, Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances.

- A-10 Corner Lots. Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.**

Recommendation Meeting: See Board guidance for D-1.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

- B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility. Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.**

Recommendation Meeting: The Board, in response to public comment, considered modifications to the roof noting that reducing the heights of the amenity area and the screens surrounding the mechanical equipment would demonstrate an act of neighborliness. The applicant should also consider relocating some of the mechanical equipment to the garage.

A shift of the amenity space and the mechanical equipment from the east to the west to create a view to Lake Union for some residents in First Hill Plaza would entail significant reworking of the proposal's massing. The Board noted that it had asked for modifications to the mass at an earlier meeting and the applicant responded positively to these. It would be problematic to change the massing at this point since the overall concept was acceptable at the 2nd EDG meeting.

C. Architectural Elements and Materials

- C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.**

Recommendation Meeting: See the Board's discussion of the terra cotta frames under the guidance for C-3.

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the**

functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

Recommendation Meeting: After listening to public comment, the Board discussed the balconies and concluded that the design with its enclosing glass walls and two foot projection beyond the larger building mass was a clever solution to inclement weather and winds at greater heights. The Board urged the applicant to provide well secured bike storage areas to minimize the placement of bikes on the balconies.

The revisions to the alley and south podium facades met with the Board's acceptance.

C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.

Recommendation Meeting: Although the terra cotta frames that form the suggested podium facing Seneca and Boylston act to reduce the scale of the tower, the frames, particularly above the first floor, possess an unintended sense of monumentality. To reduce this scale and the starkness of the void/solid relationship formed by the alternating piers and fenestration, the Board recommended that the architect introduce more detailing at the three upper levels to create a secondary or intermediary condition that responds to the larger frames and the fine grain of the ground floor. One strategy may include installation of a spandrel, solid in appearance, to express the floor level changes.

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

Recommendation Meeting: The Board did not elaborate on the choice of materials.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

Recommendation Meeting: Identifying the formal residential entry area as unresolved and non-urban in character, the Board recommended eliminating the four trees at the corner for a larger more capacious pedestrian oriented plaza. Combined with revisions to the canopy, the design should act as a gathering space.

The entry canopy does not need to engage with the terra cotta piers on Seneca St; however, its structural expression ought to echo the asymmetry of its form and visually exude a sense of thrust. The canopy and the landscaping at the plaza should work as one coherent tableau.

- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas.** Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

Recommendation Meeting: Because the Board endorsed the departure request, the solid waste storage and loading areas met expectations.

- D-8 Treatment of Alleys.** The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

Recommendation Meeting: See guidance for D-6.

- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions.** For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

Recommendation Meeting: See guidance for D-1.

E. Landscaping

- E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.** Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

Recommendation Meeting: Connecting the need for resident privacy at the Hilltop Court to the departure request for the setback at grade, the Board recommended a wider landscape buffer at the second floor terrace overlooking the south property line.

- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.** Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

Recommendation Meeting: Other than recommending changes to the design of the entry plaza and the second floor terrace, the Board appeared satisfied with the overall landscape plan.

Recommendations: The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the February 20, 2013 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not

specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the February 20, 2013 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

- 1) To reduce the scale and the starkness of the void/solid relationship formed by the alternating piers and fenestration of the terra cotta plinth introduce more detailing at the three upper levels to create a secondary or intermediary condition that responds to the larger terra cotta frames and the fine grain of the ground floor. One strategy may include installation of a spandrel solid in appearance to express the floor level changes.. (C-3)
- 2) Eliminate the four trees at the corner for a larger more capacious pedestrian oriented plaza. Combined with revisions to the canopy, the design should act as a gathering space. (D-1)
- 3) The entry canopy's structural expression ought to echo the asymmetry of its form and visually exude a sense of thrust. The canopy and the landscaping at the plaza should work as one coherent tableau. (D-1)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMEND- ATION
1. High Rise Setbacks SMC 23.45.518	At lot lines abutting neither a street nor alley: Portions of a structure 45' or below: 7' average; 5' minimum.	At the lot line abutting the neighbor to the south: portions of a structure 45' or below: 2' setback on the ground floor and 15- 20' setback on floors 2-4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allows for a more generous separation between the upper levels of the podium and the neighboring building to the south. Guideline A-5. 	Recommended Approval based on Condition # 1.